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A comparative view of the public burdens of Great Britain and Ireland

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A COMPARATIVE VIEW OF THE PUBLIC BURDENS OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

WITH

A PROPOSAL for putting both ISLANDS on an EQUALITY, in Regard to the FREEDOM of FOREIGN TRADE.

Omnino, qui Reipublicæ præfuturi sunt, duo Platonis præcepta teneant; unum ut utilitatem civium sic tueantur, ut quæcunque agunt ad eam referant, obliti commodorum suorum; alterum ut totum corpus Reipublicæ curent, ne dum partem aliquam tueantur; reliquas deserant.

Cic. de Officiis.

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A

COMPARATIVE VIEW

OF THE

PUBLIC BURDENS

OF

GREAT BRITAIN and IRELAND, &c.

THOUGH the inhabitants of Great Britain and Ireland are ſo ſtrongly connected by the natural ſituation of their territory, by intermarriages, by an intermixture of property, by a conformity of laws and intereſts, and by many other ties; yet the narrow policy of former ages has raiſed up a wall of ſeparation between them, that has hitherto greatly obſtructed their mutual proſperity. We are every day made to conſider Canada and Florida as one territory, though they are more remote from each other than Copenhagen is from Gibraltar; and yet we abſurdly look upon Great Britain and Ireland as ſtates having different intereſts, though the diſtance between their ſhores in ſome places is not ſo great as that between the oppoſite ſhores of ſeveral friths

in this iſland. Were the ſhores of Lake Erie or Lake Superior, in North America, to be well peopled with Britiſh ſubjects, we ſhould regard it as the height of impolicy if the mercantile intercourſe between the northern and ſouthern ſhores of the ſame lake were to be checked by high duties and prohibitions. Thoſe lakes however, are much more conſiderable bodies of water, than the channel that ſeparates the ſhores of Great Britain and Ireland, which channel, in true policy, ought always to have been conſidered but as a mere arm of the ſea, giving us the advantage of a more extended ſea coaſt, and facilitating the conveyance of merchandize by coaſting navigation.

Excluſive privileges nevertheleſs having been once introduced, from the weak principle of drawing the chief reſources of government from exported and imported merchandize*, each iſland ſoon began to believe the other poſſeſſed of ſuch advantages, as rendered prohibitions neceſſary for the ſecurity of their reſpective intereſts. This deſtructive ſyſtem is now thought by many people to be the natural ſyſtem; or at leaſt they alledge, that the public burdens borne by the ſubjects in each iſland are ſo diſproportionate as to render a commercial equality for both extremely difficult, if not impracticable. Others, with much more reaſon, regard the reciprocal reſtraints on trade between the two iſlands as moſt unnatural; and think that it would be far from being difficult or impracticable to adjuſt the differences

* A fund of taxation at that time probably not one tenth part ſo large as that of the produce of the land, joined to the internal conſumption.

ferences in the public burdens of each, were an accurate examination and eſtimate of thoſe differences but once obtained. I have, in the following pages, attempted ſuch an examination and ſuch an eſtimate, with a view to the eſtabliſhment of an equality of trade in both iſlands, hoping for the indulgence of the public, if, upon a ſubject of ſuch national importance, which has not hitherto been made an object of diſcuſſion by any of our political or commercial writers that I have met with, I ſhould not be able to give all the ſatisfaction that could be wiſhed. When the ſubject once comes under the deliberation of the parliament of each kingdom, the happy conſequences flowing from an equality of trade in both iſlands, will then appear with all their evidence and force, and we ſhall have reaſon to be aſtoniſhed, how ſuch an eſtabliſhment, ſo eaſily to be accompliſhed, and now become ſo neceſſary, could have been ſo long neglected.

By the preſent commercial ſyſtem, Ireland conſiders herſelf as the moſt aggrieved; but ſhe has been long accuſtomed to complain of other hardſhips than that of a limited trade, which hardſhips, when the actual ſituation of that iſland is examined, will appear to be founded more on popular opinion than reality. The moſt plauſible of theſe is, the exceſſive drain of wealth occaſioned by the abſentees or landholders not reſident in Ireland, which the Iriſh allege as a grievance peculiar to them; and the next is the great weight of their taxes paid directly to government. Now, though I acknowledge, that the burdens and grievances of Ireland are very conſiderable, and, on our ſide, in the higheſt

higheſt degree impolitic, I hope nevertheleſs to make it evident, that the number of her abſentees, and the exceſs of her taxes cannot be reckoned among thoſe grievances‡. I deny that the drain of abſentees is a tax peculiar to Ireland. It is a tax which the capital of every great empire draws from all its remote provinces, and in the Britiſh ſtate is not more paid by Ireland than by the diſtant counties in Great Britain. This will appear evident to the conviction of every reader, who conſiders the nature of the internal circulation of a ſtate, and examines what are the chief ſources of its opulence and wealth.

The country is the chief productive fund of national wealth; and though it be continually pouring into the capital city, yet the ſmall ſtock that remains behind, added to the frugality that prevails there, ſuffices, with the bounty of nature, to afford new ſupplies, and at the ſame time to maintain a kind of eaſineſs in the remote towns and villages, provided the demands of the capital be not exorbitant. An hundred men employed in country labour will produce more to the ſtate, than an hundred thouſand livery ſervants, coachmen, and chairmen in London; for theſe laſt, though not employed in deſtroying and ſlaughtering, produce no more national wealth than an hundred thouſand

‡ The people of Ireland think their circumſtances much worſe than they really are, and have had many pſeudo patriots among them, the foremoſt of whom is the witty author, but wretched politician, Swift, who have ſtudiouſly endeavoured to make them believe ſo. For one monument in memory of Swift as a politician, the Iriſh ought to erect twenty to the memory of biſhop Berkeley, as there is much more true political knowledge in his Queries alone, than in all Swift's works put together.

ſoldiers

ſoldiers encamped on the ſame ſpot would produce. London, ſo far from enriching the country, is in great part maintained and ſupported by the diſtant provinces gratis. For example, ſuppoſe the rents of the abſentees from the county of Northumberland, which probably exceed fifty thouſand pounds, are to be paid at the capital, and that a company of merchants at Newcaſtle ſend coals to that value to London, thoſe merchants may be paid for their coals by bills of exchange upon the ſtewards of the abſentees of the ſame county, in which caſe it is plain, Northumberland not only furniſhes the coals, but furniſhes the payment of them. Again, ſuppoſing a Lincolnſhire grazier brings up a thouſand head of cattle to London; the butcher who purchaſes thoſe cattle, we ſhall ſuppoſe for eight thouſand pounds, by paying that ſum into the treaſury, may procure from thence a draught of the ſame value upon a collector of the exciſe in Lincolnſhire, which he gives to the grazier, who receives caſh for it upon his return home. I know not whether this preciſe method be uſed in this kingdom; but I know that it is practiſed in France; and whatever be the channel of exchanges, it comes in the end to the ſame thing, and plainly proves that Lincolnſhire pays Lincolnſhire, and London receives the cattle for nothing. Theſe examples may ſuffice in place of an hundred others; and may ſerve to check the preſumption of the Londoners, who vaunt the prodigious ſupplies that city affords the ſtate, and expect that their factious deliberations ſhould have a controling influence in national counſels.

But

But if the diſtant provinces be continually pouring into the capital more than ever returns, what becomes of all that wealth centering in London? That queſtion may be anſwered by another; what becomes of all the coals carried to London? Both are conſumed there. If all the demands of the rich landholders, abſentees from their eſtates by their reſidence in London, added to the demands of government upon the diſtant provinces were to be paid in caſh, it is plain that within the compaſs of one year, not five ſhillings in ſilver would be found in Great Britain out of the county of Middleſex. But both the wants of the ſtate and of the rich proprietors require a circulation of a different kind. The taxes and rents are moſtly exchanged on the ſpot for proviſions and merchandiſe, neceſſaries wanted at the capital, and the bills for thoſe proviſions and merchandiſe ballance the country's debts to the center of government and chief reſidence of the land proprietors, the money or caſh, both in town and country, remaining at its uſual equilibrium, unleſs ſome extraordinary demand of government, ſuch as the maintenance of an army abroad, ſhould draw a more than ordinary proportion of it to the capital, in order to be tranſported out of the kingdom. Ireland, therefore, cannot ſtate the expences of its abſentees as a peculiar hardſhip, for in that article, it has only neighbour's fare, it being certain that the remote provinces, both within and without the iſland of Great Britain, receive no equivalent whatever for great part of what they furniſh to the capital, except the equivalent of protection and defence. At the capital reſides

the

the intelligence that directs government, accompanied by many luxurious appendages, together with ten thousands of idlers, allured thither by pleasure only, with great numbers more, whose occupations have no relation to industry, and all are consumers, yielding no retribution of wealth for wealth. Those in the country, on the other hand, who give themselves to agriculture, are always employed in producing something that did not exist before; and this produce, on the whole, in every well regulated state, ought to be so abundant as amply to suffice for the maintenance, the clothing, housing firing, &c. of the whole inhabitants, with some reserve for an accumulation of wealth. Bodies politic, in this respect, have an apt resemblance to the animal body, and with them every day verifies the truth of the fable of the belly and the members, the latter feeding the former; but as this is a natural state, it is a state that does not require a remedy, and nothing but ignorance or cross humour can reckon it a disease.

The murmurers about the absentees from Ireland found their whole reasoning upon a sophism, never considering Ireland as a part of a great sovereignty; but falsely supposing it a free independent sovereignty of itself, maintaining itself in peace with its neighbours by its own strength, and regulating all its political and commercial interests freely by its own deliberations. But no man of sense and candour, the least acquainted with the subject, will affirm that to be the actual state of Ireland. The army maintained there, by the confession of the Irish themselves, is intended only for quelling the domestic dis-

turbances of the peace, and is allowed by thoſe gentlemen of Ireland, who know their country well, not to be too numerous for that purpoſe. Againſt a foreign enemy, they have the protection of the fleet and army of Great Britain, joined with their own auxiliary force, and that of American Britons, all forming but one maſs of power, capable of making itſelf reſpected by any ſtate in Europe, that ſhould think of annoying it. This formidable power muſt have a center ſomewhere; and this center is ſituated moſt commodiouſly for the whole in Great Britain. What limits bodies politic ought to be reduced to, or what extent they ought to acquire, for the beſt well-being of the people that compoſe them, is a queſtion that politicians and lawgivers will never be able to reſolve. I reaſon only upon the actual ſtate of Great Britain and Ireland as forming one ſovereignty, ſwayed and directed by one ſupreme deliberation, all the parts of which ought to contribute to the ſupport of the whole. And Ireland, when conſidered in this view, will be found to be more favoured in the article of abſentees, than many remote parts of England; for ſince Dublin is become ſo large, ſo populous and elegant a city, with eſtabliſhed theatres, and abundance of other amuſements for the affluent, nearly on a par with thoſe of London, by far the greateſt number of the nobility and gentry of Ireland, who do not reſide upon their eſtates, make that the field for diſplaying their luxury, or for enjoying the pleaſures of ſelect ſocieties and literary intimacies, all of which that capital affords in an eminent degree. The nobility and gentry of the northern

thern counties of England have no ſuch gay and agreeable place of reſort to prevent their flocking to London; and whitherſoever they travel, their rents muſt follow them.

In a monarchical government, the very form of the conſtitution neceſſarily draws many of the nobility and gentry to the chief reſidence of the ſupreme governor. When the number of thoſe abſentees becomes exceſſive, I do not deny but it may be impoveriſhing to the provinces, and conſequently prejudicial to the whole community. But Ireland is much more ſecure againſt ſuch an evil than the remote provinces of Great Britain, for, as I have above obſerved, the elegancies and luxuries of Dublin, with the parliament reſident there, will always ſerve as checks againſt the temptation of flocking to London, and will retain at home a proportional greater number of the Iriſh gentry, when compared with the gentry of Great Britain. Though in ſuch a republican ſtate as Switzerland, a large capital city compoſed of abſentees, is not neceſſary, and would be extremely detrimental: yet in a commercial nation wholly ſurrounded by the ſea, having a maritime city for the capital, and a naval force to maintain for its defence, the very reſort of the landed gentlemen thither, provided it be not exceſſive, contributes to diffuſe proſperity over the whole, by creating a great intercourſe by ſea between the ſeat of empire and the provinces, and inducing greater numbers of people to proſecute a ſea-faring life. The immenſe coaſting trade of Great Britain is owing to the vaſt concourſe of people to London; and while this trade excites to induſtry in the remote parts in a greater degree than could be

expected if every gentleman were to ſpend his rent among his tenants upon his eſtate, the cauſe that promotes it may be reckoned beneficial to the kingdom. The people in Ireland cannot juſtly allege that the counties in Great Britain can afford to pay large ſums to abſentees at London, better than Ireland can, ſince the Britiſh abſentees reſide in the ſame country and great part of the ſums muſt return back by circulation. From the examples of Northumberland and Lincolnſhire, it appears plain that the returns are not to be counted upon. This traffic is not ſo much a circulation as a *current* flowing one way, and ending in evaporation or conſumption: but at the ſame time partly aſſiſting in giving activity to the machine of government, upon which depends the ſecurity and proſperity of the whole.

From the above reaſoning, with regard to the abſentees, we may ſafely draw the following corollay, That the apprehenſions of thoſe are wholly groundleſs, who think that if Ireland were permitted a free liberty in trade and commerce, ſhe would even drain the opulence from Great Britain, and ſoon become of more prejudice than ſervice to us. It is demonſtrably clear, that while the ſeat of government of the Britiſh nation remains in this iſland, Ireland, like every other diſtant member, muſt contribute her ſhare to the luxurious waſte at the capital, and conſequently the ſuperiority of wealth muſt always be on our ſide. In proportion as Ireland becomes richer, ſo will ſhe proſper more within herſelf, and contribute more to the opulence of Great Britain. Beſides, commerce, like every other thing, has its ne plus ultra, or fixt limit; for allowing that the low

rents

rents and low wages in Ireland might at firſt act as a premium in promoting its foreign trade, and that by a large balance it ſoon accumulated much wealth, yet that very wealth, by enlarging the maſs in circulation, would raiſe the price of land, and of every thing elſe, and of courſe check the farther enlargement of the trade, and leſſen the annual ballance. We do not read in ancient hiſtory that the Romans, after they had annexed Sicily to their empire, put the leaſt reſtraint upon its trade, or thought that iſland would ſwallow up Italy. Nay, the ſmall kingdom of Naples has not the leaſt jealouſy of Sicily, though the proportion between the inſular and continental territory of the Neapolitans is much greater than between Ireland and Great Britain. There is a faſhion in politics as in every thing elſe. Towards the end of the laſt century, and in the beginning of this, the great opulence of the Dutch aſtoniſhed all their neighbours, and the political writers of thoſe and of modern times, having conſidered their narrow territory, and the various manufactures carried on by them, have, very erroneouſly, attributed their wealth to thoſe two circumſtances, the importance of which they have exaggerated beyond meaſure. Now nothing is more eaſily demonſtrable than that the Dutch have been indebted for their power and opulence, not to manufactures, but to territorial riches, and, next to that, to the univerſal freightage of the products and merchandize of other nations, added to their ſpirit of frugality and hoarding. The Dutch, I fancy, would have been far from adopting the maxims attributed to them by our political writers; and if they

they could have aſſociated to their republic four or five of the adjoining provinces, they would not have reſtrained thoſe provinces from puſhing their induſtry and commerce as far as they poſſibly could. The notion of concentering manufactures, where the territory is large and fertile, is in the higheſt degree abſurd. A farmer who ſhould lay all his dung, or throw all his ſeed into his garden, could not expect ſuch return, as he who prudently diſtributed both among the different incloſures of his farm.

If Ireland cannot count the number of her abſentees as a political grievance peculiar to her, neither can ſhe reckon herſelf aggrieved by the exceſs of taxes raiſed for the direct ſupport of government. Taxes in every ſtate ought to bear a certain proportion to the wealth or yearly income of that ſtate, and the proper ſtandard for computing this wealth or income, though not the full and exact meaſurement of it, is the yearly rents of all the lands, joined to the ballance of the foreign trade. The land-rents of Ireland are generally ſtated, by thoſe who are well acquainted with the country, at two millions five hundred thouſand pounds. Above forty years ago, two millions was reckoned an undervaluation for thoſe rents, and many people now ſuppoſe them near three millions. A deduction of a conſiderable part ought to be made on account of the abſentees; for it would not be juſt to count that as a revenue, which goes out of the kingdom; yet as Ireland acquits herſelf of that debt, whatever it be, by the profits ariſing from the ballance of her trade with Great Britain and other ſtates, this laſt may, in the preſent

preſent computation, be put as an equivalent for the preceding deduction, eſpecially as it is known to yield a ſurplus. We have then, as the ſtandard of the actual wealth of Ireland, two millions five hundred thouſand pounds†; and the taxes amount, communibus annis, to about eight hundred thouſand pounds, which is not quite a third of the ſuppoſed fund.

Let us examine the burdens of Great Britain by the ſame ſtandard. The amount of the land-tax in England makes the rents of the lands ten millions; but as that valuation is generally allowed to be hardly more than one half of the value, we ſhall ſtate the real rents of all the lands of England at twenty millions. At the union of England and Scotland, the land rents of the latter, were moſt impolitically and abſurdly rated but at a fortieth part of the lands of the former, which were then computed but at ten millions. The land-rents of Scotland by that eſtimation would only make two hundred and fifty thouſand pounds; but as that was a great undervaluation, and very conſiderable improvements have been made there within theſe ſixty years, it will be nearer the truth to reckon the land-rents of that part of the iſland, one million and an half, which added to the rents of England, makes the ſum of twenty-one millions and an half. To this muſt be added the balance of our foreign trade, which is by ſome computed at three millions, by others

† I muſt caution my reader not to think this the whole fund, though it has been ignorantly taken as ſuch by Swift. It is only a ſtandard of wealth juſtly proportional to that in Great Britain, and the original ſource of every other fund.

others at four, and by others at four and an half. We ſhall take the higheſt ſum, which added to the land-rents, makes twenty-ſix millions as the ſtandard of taxation for Great Britain. Let us now ſee what proportion the taxes or public ſupplies bear to that fund. The grants for the year 1770, every article appropriated, amount to above ſeven millions; but to theſe muſt be added other taxes upon the people, ſuch as four millions five hundred thouſand pounds, for the annuities yearly due to the public creditors; eight hundred thouſand pounds as his majeſty's civil liſt, and at leaſt ſeven hundred thouſand pounds, as the unappropriated ſurplus of the ſinking fund, all which added together, make a ſum of thirteen millions annually raiſed upon the people of Great Britain, in time of profound peace; and upon the fund above ſtated of twenty-ſix millions. While Great Britain then is paying about one half, Ireland is paying not quite one third; or, in other words, while the productive fund of Ireland ſtands to that of Great Britain nearly as one to ten, her public burdens, compared to thoſe of this iſland, are only as one to nineteen. If a trifling part of the taxes of Ireland are ſent out of the kingdom, the taxes ſent from this iſland to foreign parts will be found to be twenty times as great, and this is a burden which foreign acquiſitions, ſuch as Minorca and Gibraltar, entail upon Great Britain. But thoſe acquiſitions are judged neceſſary for maintaining the rank which this nation at preſent holds in Europe; and in ſupporting thoſe charges, and every other that may properly be called foreign, Ireland pays but a very ſmall ſhare

in

in proportion to her income, and when conſidered as a collective part of the Britiſh nation.

I have avoided taking the quantity of money in either kingdom into the account of its reſpective productive funds, as that is almoſt univerſally meaſured by the rents of the lands, excepting in ſome commercial ſtates, where the ſpirit of amaſſing and hoarding in a length of years forms many large dead funds, which are not known to exiſt, but as great occaſions bring them into circulation. Much money cannot long be uſed in circulation, without proportionably affecting the rents of the lands; nor can the rents of lands be heightened in any extraordinary degree, without rendering a greater quantity of money, either nominal or real, neceſſary in circulation. The practice of modern times likewiſe, in the unlimited coinage of paper, ſhews that it depends wholly upon the inclination of a community, whether it ſhould have much money or not; and Ireland, if ſhe pleaſed, might in a few months poſſeſs as full an abundance of money as Great Britain. If a large currency, or as M. Pinto calls it, l'augmentation de numeraire, be ſo eſſential as he repreſents it, Ireland would do well directly to iſſue out a greater quantity of paper; but I ſuſpect, in that caſe, the augmented price of her products and manufactures would ſoon convince her, that ſhe had done better to have founded her politics upon the maxim of Sir William Petty, "that "it is very ill huſbandry to increaſe the caſh "of a nation otherwiſe than by increaſing "its wealth, ſimul & ſemel." This maxim

likewiſe requires its modification; but we ſee in the example of our North American colonies, that ſocieties may yearly increaſe their wealth and opulence, without having any money among them that can be ſaid to have an intrinſic value. And Great Britain herſelf would ſoon be in the ſame circumſtances with her American colonies, with regard to caſh, were ſhe obliged directly to refund all the money ſhe at preſent owes to foreigners; there is therefore no great reaſon to look upon the quantity of circulating money as of much conſequence in the eſtimate of the yearly income of a ſtate.

It has been proved, I think demonſtratively, that the taxes raiſed in Ireland are nearly one half leſs than thoſe raiſed in Great Britain, in proportion to the reſpective ability of each iſland. But ſhould Ireland be put upon an equality with Great Britain in point of the freedom of trade, which true policy dictates the propriety of, it is but natural to require, that ſhe ſhould alſo be placed nearer to an equality with this iſland in reſpect to the public burdens; and that may be done moſt advantageouſly for Ireland, by a land-tax, to riſe and fall, as the land-tax in Great Britain riſes and falls; for in all military armaments, there can be no cauſe of expence to this iſland, that ought not to be a proportionable cauſe of expence to the neighbouring iſland. If no other civilized ſtate in Europe but Ireland, and none in Aſia that we know of, and no community among the European colonies in America, think proper wholly to exempt lands from public burdens, an impartial conſiderer, without weighing any other circumſtances, would be apt to conclude that there is more of impolicy than true policy

licy in such an exemption in Ireland. But should he find that taxes in Ireland, instead of being laid upon the *most opulent*, are, in many cases laid upon the *most miserable*, who have hardly any means of industry, he would think himself justified in affirming, that the nation could not thrive as might be expected, till a reform was made in such an essential article. The lands in Ireland lie under a heavier burden than if they were to pay three shillings, or even four shillings, in the pound to the support of government; which burden presses also upon the commerce and industry of the inhabitants. This burden is the high rate of the interest of money in that island, the disadvantages of which are generally acknowledged, and need not here be detailed; but, happily for Ireland, and I may also say for Great Britain, the legislature of that kingdom have it wholly in their power, by the easiest and most constitutional means, to reduce that rate to three per cent. Such a reduction of interest would of consequence raise the value of estates nine or ten years purchase, that is, would render land a possession by one fourth more valuable than at present; which would be more than a full equivalent for a direct transition to a land-tax, a tax which, like all others, is paid by the industrious consumers. Were the value of the lands of Ireland doubled, the gentlemen of that island would not only be gainers, but the inhabitants would find the taxes less burdensome. Now almost the same consequences would follow, if, instead of the value of the lands, the quantity of industry were doubled, which I believe few people acquainted with Ireland will deny to

be poſſible with the preſent number of hands. But the trueſt means to augment not only the marketable but the real value of lands, is to augment the ſtock of induſtry; and nothing ſo likely to effect that as the opening a free trade to Ireland, and the taking off and removing the oppreſſive burdens from the lower claſs of people, which they labour under from injudicious taxes, and I am afraid from diſcouraging leaſes.

The former of theſe depends upon the joint concurrence of the legiſlature of both kingdoms; but the latter may be effected by the parliament of Ireland ſingly, and is ſo eſſential to the proſperity of that iſland, that were the ſame reſtrictions upon its trade even ſtill to be continued, a new plan of taxation ought nevertheleſs to be purſued, in order to excite the poor to induſtry, and check the propenſity to expenſive luxuries in people of ſmall incomes, who inſtead of following buſineſs, are tempted, from the preſent indulgence of the legiſlature, to rank themſelves among the uninduſtrious claſſes. Were the great commercial cities, ſuch as Dublin, Cork, Waterford, Belfaſt, &c. but properly attentive to their own as well as to the national proſperity, they might be expected to ſollicit ſuch a reformation in the mode of taxation, which would give new life to commerce throughout the whole iſland. Where the poor have the means and the ſpirit of induſtry, they can bear great taxes, as their application to labour is a rich fund; but in a country where indolence and oppreſſion keep the poor people beggarly, a very ſmall impoſition is more than they can bear, and makes them immediately deſert their habitations, or ſhelter themſelves

themſelves ſtill more in idleneſs and miſery, againſt vexations which they look upon as arbitrary. All means to animate them to induſtry ought to be uſed; and among the moſt effectual may be reckoned the exempting them, as much as poſſible, from all direct impoſitions to government, and granting them long leaſes upon moderate terms; and ſhould trade be opened, the aſſurance of good and conſtant wages to the workman and manufacturer. What encouragements or diſcouragements poor farmers in Ireland meet with from their landlords, I cannot pretend to mention; but we have one very bad ſymptom, in regard to the protection and encouragement of agriculture, in the frequent advertiſements for tenants that are to be met with in the Dublin news-papers.

The impoſitions of government upon the poor may be judged of more eaſily; but though theſe impoſitions in the maſs ſhould not be found to be very burdenſome, yet, from their diſcouraging nature, they may check ten times their value in induſtry, and in that view are very impoveriſhing to the ſtate. It is not a plan of thriving to pay a million to receive one hundred thouſand pounds; but if all the non-working and half-working people in Ireland, were but to labour as the lower claſſes of people in England, they would add above a million annually to the national income, which would have the effect of making proviſions and merchandize more abundant, or of lowering the prices of them conſiderably. The concluſion is not always juſt, that becauſe rents and wages are low in a ſtate, one may expect in that ſtate an abundance of every thing at the cheapeſt prices.

prices. On ſuch a ſuppoſition, Siberia would be the moſt abundant country, where one may have twenty or thirty acres of the fineſt meadow for the rent of one penny. The truly affluent country is that where, independent of the maſs of money in circulation, an abundance and variety of products are every day ready to be offered in exchange for an abundance and variety of manufactures, the whole the effect of the induſtry of the inhabitants. The two great ſources of national opulence are, the fertility of the ſoil and the labour of the poor; and when this laſt is checked by injudicious taxes, and other diſcouraging circumſtances, it has the ſame effect upon the maſs of the people as if the lands were rendered by ſo many degrees more barren. One ought, therefore, to be as zealous in removing indolence from the people, as in removing barrenneſs from the ſoil. The moſt direct means for the former in Ireland, would be to puniſh with the utmoſt ſeverity ſtrolling mendicants, who not only infeſt the towns and villages, but parade in great numbers through the large opulent cities; to contrive premiums, if poſſible, for the induſtrious; and, by giving ſome marks of diſtinction to thoſe who are well lodged and well clothed, to fill their minds with the ſpirit of amaſſing, which would ſoon make them tax each other, from rivalſhip, ten times more than they are now taxed by the ſtate, and yet all increaſe their own wealth at the ſame time, and conſequently the national wealth.

The eager deſire of gaining and amaſſing among individuals has the moſt powerful of all effects in the promoting of induſtry in a com-

a community. Suppoſe forty ſhoe-makers, in a town, agree to make only a certain number of pairs of ſhoes a week, and to ſell their ſhoes at a high price, in order to enjoy every other day as a holiday; if any one of thoſe ſhoe-makers breaks the agreement, and computes, that by working ſix days in the week, inſtead of four, or twelve hours in the day, inſtead of eight, he could afford to ſell his ſhoes nearly a third cheaper, he would, by conforming his practice to ſuch a calculation, quickly have the whole trade to himſelf, and ruin his rivals, if they did not follow his example, and work as diligently as he. This induſtrious, or avaricious tradeſman, having once forced his brother-workmen to be as induſtrious as himſelf, the conſequence would be, that the quantity of ſhoes produced would be one third more, or the price one third leſs. The ſame reaſoning is applicable to every other kind of manufacture; and ſhews what national wealth might be expected from the lower claſſes of people, were they but rouſed to a ſpirit of induſtry, and encouraged to amaſs ſome little property of their own. One great ſign of the opulence of England is the frequent accounts we have, in the public papers, of eminent tallow-chandlers and eminent grocers dying worth twenty thouſand and thirty thouſand pounds; which opulence is not ſo much to be computed from the wealth poſſeſſed by thoſe individuals, as from the rivalſhip that muſt have been produced among their fellow-workmen by their perſevering induſtry.

Moſt of our writers on commerce take notice of the poverty of Spain, which they attribute to the balance of trade with the other

other European ſtates being continually againſt that nation; for they tell us, that the whole of the gold and ſilver which the Spaniards annually draw from their American colonies does not remain in Spain, but paſſes immediately to the commercial nations with whom the Spaniards trade. Now the very reaſon thoſe writers aſſign for the poverty of Spain ſeems to prove it flowing from another cauſe; for if Spain can pay her debts to her European neighbours by the gold and ſilver that is annually brought from her American colonies, ſhe ought herſelf, at the end of the year, to be neither poorer nor richer than ſhe was before. The poverty of Spain then not being owing to her paying annually a large commercial balance to foreigners, there muſt be ſome other cauſe; and I doubt not but that cauſe will be found to be the lazineſs and idleneſs of the low people, from which probably that ſtate ſuffers an annual loſs of ten millions ſterling, that is, ſhe has yearly ten millions leſs to ſpend or to hoard; and ſuppoſing only an annual deficiency of one million in accumulation, this, in the courſe of two centuries, would make her ſink in comparative wealth two hundred millions: and I queſtion whether this laſt ſum now laid out in improving her lands, roads, harbours, villages, towns, manufactures, &c. would bring her up to an equality with England at preſent. But beſides this loſs in accumulation, ariſing from the idleneſs of the working hands, there is another annual loſs, from the ſame cauſe, of nine millions, in the daily expence for what may be called tranſitory wants, which muſt render the number of wretched and miſerable very great in Spain,

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that is, the number of thoſe who have nothing, or not a ſufficiency to ſpend; and the revenues of the ſtate, which ought to have increaſed from the accumulation as well as by the tranſitory expence, muſt ſuffer a deficiency of at leaſt two millions annually from that neglect of induſtry among the lower claſſes of the people.

Happily for Ireland, there is another ſpirit in the government of that iſland than in the government of Spain. The warmeſt patriotic zeal has long animated the legiſlature of Ireland; and maxims having a tendency to promote the proſperity of the iſland are adopted and purſued by them with activity and perſeverance. I cannot help remarking, however, that ſeveral prejudices ſtill ſubſiſt among many people there, which hinder them from perceiving the true cauſes of the unimproved ſtate of the iſland, or make them believe that inſurmountable obſtacles lie in the way of its proſperity. Among thoſe prejudices, the chief may be reckoned that relating to the abſentees, and another, which attributes the poverty of Ireland to the ſcarcity of caſh, or ſmall quantity of circulating money. The firſt of theſe has already been ſet in a new, and, I hope, in a true light, ſo as to prove the drain from abſentees not peculiar to Ireland; but a drain common to every diſtant member of a great empire, interwoven with the very eſſence of all monarchical ſtates, and, when not exceſſive, no ways detrimental to their higheſt proſperity. The other, regarding the ſmall quantity of caſh in circulation, is more the complaint of the ſlothful than of the induſtrious; and if the former of theſe be numerous in a nation, the

complaint will be very general, but may not for all that be juſt. Individuals are counted rich according to the quantity of money they poſſeſs or can command; but it is not always ſo with ſtates, or I may venture to ſay, it is never ſo: for were the Engliſh or the Dutch to be as idle as ſome nations are, diſtreſs and miſery would prevail among them, in ſpite of their accumulated heaps of gold, nay, would even be more ſeverely felt on account of thoſe heaps. The ſlothful has as many wants to ſupply as the induſtrious; but diſliking to have recourſe to the fund of aſſiduous labour, which is a rich mine to the other, he lays the blame of his diſtreſſes upon the general want of money in the country, never reflecting, that if the quantity of money ſhould be doubled, or even quadrupled, if he did not alter his manner of life, and apply to induſtry, a very ſmall proportion of the augmented wealth would fall to his ſhare, and he would feel his wants ſtill more preſſing than before. The idea that national poverty was connected with the ſcarcity of gold and ſilver, and that national wealth would be the conſequence of poſſeſſing thoſe metals, has long ago been prevalent in Ireland, as appears from the following paſſage of a very judicious author on trade, who wrote in the beginning of this century. " We need go " no further, he ſays, than our neighbouring " kingdom* of Ireland to ſhew the deluſion " of being rich with other people's money. " After the laſt war, in 1697, when the coin " was raiſed to a ſtandard in England, it was " raiſed, very imprudently, about twenty per " cent. above it in Ireland, upon which, Ire- " land filled with money, more than they

" had

" had uſe for; but as ſoon as guineas fell " from twenty-ſix to twenty-three, and the " other coins in proportion, they who tum- " bled in their money carried it out as faſt, " and left Ireland as it is, thus poor to a pro- " verb: and ſo it will fare with any country " that fancies itſelf rich with borrowed mo- " ney." (See Sir Francis Brewſter's Eſſays on Trade, 1702). This author ſpeaks of a period but five years later than the ſettlement of Ireland by king William, after a ruinous civil war, when agriculture, commerce, and manufactures were at a very low ſtate in that iſland, and when the reſource of paper currency was not ſo much as known there. All theſe circumſtances muſt doubtleſs have occaſioned a great deal of diſtreſs among the people of Ireland, but they certainly graſped at a ſhadow, when they thought of removing that diſtreſs by rating gold and ſilver twenty per cent more than their neighbours; nay, perhaps, forty per cent more, by not only taking the metals at a higher valuation; but, probably, paying for them an intereſt one fifth higher than that paid by their neighbours.

The notion that money of gold and ſilver is abſolutely eſſential for the proſperity of a ſtate, may in fact become the means of keeping a ſtate poor, by preventing the inhabitants from adverting to the real ſources of their riches, and inducing them to give a high price, or pay very dear for an inſtrument of commerce, which they can actually do without. In the reign of queen Elizabeth gold and ſilver could not be borrowed, but at an intereſt of ten per cent†. which was a

† From whence aroſe the proverb in lord Bacon's time, *That the devil had his tythes as well as the clergy.* It is not much more than twenty years ſince money was at ten per cent. in Ireland.

tax of a third or a fourth upon the profit of the borrower, ſuppoſing him to make thirty, or forty per cent advantage in conſequence of his loan. Should only two millions have been lent at that intereſt in queen Elizabeth's time, it would have created a yearly burden upon induſtry of two hundred thouſand pounds heavier than the ſupplies then raiſed annually for the government, two thirds of which burden the induſtrious might have got rid of by having recourſe to another medium of commerce. This expedient would have been thought impoſſible in thoſe days; but fact and experience, in modern times, juſtify the practicability and great utility of it. Suppoſing a number of monied men were to carry their caſh to ſome of our colonies in America, and graciouſly offer the inhabitants the uſe of their money at an intereſt of ten per cent, as the means of quickly enriching the colony, the coloniſts might juſtly reply to thoſe monied men, "We re-
"gard a fertile ſoil as the one thing need-
"ful for the ſuſtenance of life. Let us but
"have that, and with it and our own in-
"duſtry, we do not deſpair of enriching
"ourſelves and our poſterity without the
"immediate aſſiſtance of gold and ſilver;
"therefore, as we find we can do without
"your money, you may carry it to thoſe
"who ſet a value upon it, or ſee if you can
"extract from it food and cloathing as we
"can from our lands." Moſt of our American coloniſts, if we regard their manner of conducting their internal commerce, give in fact this reply by their actions. They have, within theſe hundred years, extracted above two hundred millions from their lands, built

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many cities, launched thouſands of ſhips, acquired large ſtocks of cattle, and much other ſubſtance, with very little aid from gold and ſilver; and were all other communities actuated by the ſame ſpirit, the monied men would find themſelves exactly in the ſituation of Midas, and ſee the induſtrious well cloathed and well fed, while they themſelves were ſtarving.

Few countries on the globe in the northern latitudes afford ſuch reſources of wealth from the fertility of the ſoil as Ireland affords, yet by far too great a proportion of the lands of that iſland are lying much in the ſame ſtate as they were left by the flood of Noah. The people, inſtead of beſtowing attention upon that immenſe annual loſs, keep up the cry of ruin on account of the ſcarcity of caſh, and ſome years ago were filled with the greateſt alarms, and looked upon themſelves as on the point of perdition, from a threatened importation of braſs halfpence, a puny evil, which muſt in its very operation ſoon have corrected itſelf, though not one ſyllable had ever been written againſt it. Ireland, though inhabited from the greateſt antiquity, is quite a young commercial ſtate; therefore, as no gold and ſilver mines are wrought in that country, it is not in the leaſt ſurpriſing to find a ſcarcity of thoſe metals there, which only abound in ſtates that have had for a long courſe of years a lucrative commerce, without the exhauſting drain of expenſive foreign wars. The commercial exiſtence of Ireland can hardly be traced farther back than that of our American colonies, and even now its trade cannot, properly ſpeaking, be ſaid to have acquired ſuch a maturity as that of the coloniſts,

coloniſts, when we conſider the ſhameful deficiency of ſhipping in that iſland, the reproach of which is, in part, owing to impolitic regulations, and imprudent counſels in Great Britain. The Iriſh have, no doubt, bought and ſold with their neighbours for ages paſt, but not with the ſyſtematic view of accumulation and profit, that has prevailed ſince the Revolution, to the great advantage of the iſland, which has more than doubled its ſtock of wealth ſince that period, without adding in the leaſt, perhaps, to its quantity of gold and ſilver. The ſlothful and diſcontented keep their eyes upon this laſt circumſtance, and will not ſee the former, which is by far the moſt eſſential.

Were they, however, but properly to conſider the conſequences ariſing from a ſmall ſtock of money in circulation, inſtead of looking on it as a cauſe of diſcouragement, they would draw from it one of the greateſt incitements to induſtry. Every thing to be purchaſed at home, if they are but induſtrious, will be purchaſed the cheaper for it. Were the expence of living equal in both iſlands, many more land proprietors would be tempted to crowd to London; but while Dublin continues leſs luxurious, and leſs expenſive than the capital of Great Britain, Iriſh families, of good fortunes, if they have children to provide for, will chuſe not to quit Ireland, which will prevent the drain of abſentees from becoming exceſſive†. High

† Some people at Dublin, to prove the opulence and the flouriſhing ſtate of Ireland, have vaunted that living was as dear at that capital as at London, which, if true, would be a real cauſe of lamentation to the Iriſh, and not of boaſting; for nothing could happen more prejudicial to Ireland than ſuch an equality, which ought to be prevented by every kind of attention on the part of the Iriſh. With the ſame judgment, ſome people give it as a proof of England's being the richeſt country in Europe, becauſe it is the deareſt.

wages,

wages, and high perfection in the arts, are no more neceſſarily connected together, than national poverty is with a ſmall quantity of gold and ſilver. Do the people of Geneva ſell the fewer watches, becauſe they ſell them cheap, that is, becauſe they work for low wages? On the contrary, the very circumſtance of cheapneſs, occaſions ſo great a demand for watches from thence, that a full third of the inhabitants of the republic, or about thirteen thouſand people, (two or three thouſand of whom are women,) gain their livelihood by that branch of manufacture. Were the great maſters in painting, who flouriſhed in Italy two or three hundred years ago, inferior in merit to our modern portrait painters, becauſe they did not receive ſo much for five or ſix of their performances as ours gain by one of theirs? Are the porcelaine manufactures in China, or the weavers in the Eaſt Indies leſs ſkilful than ours, becauſe they work for two-pence and three-pence a day? Theſe few inſtances, not to mention many others, may ſerve to ſhew the falſeneſs of that maxim, that cheap countries are conſequently and neceſſarily poor countries, where the arts muſt abſolutely languiſh. A cheap country is, to an enterpriſing manufacturer, the ſame thing as new ſoil to a ſkilful planter or farmer. Both give the moſt juſt expectation of the richeſt returns of induſtry. What, but the cheapneſs of countries, firſt drew the hardware manufacture to Birmingham, and the great woollen manufacture to Yorkſhire and Weſtmoreland? What fixes the glaſs works at Newcaſtle and Briſtol, but the cheapneſs of firing, an article that makes great part of the expence of glaſs.

Now

Now among an induſtrious people, what elſe is cheapneſs or lowneſs of wages, than, *the having a great deal of labour for a ſmall quantity of money?* And can any circumſtance be more favourable than this to a nation, that has manufactures to carry to a foreign market, where they may meet with a competition with the manufactures of other nations? Where two ſtates offer merchandize of equal goodneſs, that ſtate which can ſell the cheapeſt, will not only be ſure of the readieſt market, but will in all probability gain more by what it ſells, than the other ſtate which ſells dear. Great Britain being obliged, on account of her immenſe national debt, to keep up an exceſſive circulation, has thereby rendered proviſions and wages ſo dear, that ſhe has in a great degree precluded herſelf from foreign markets; and this dearneſs is far from being owing to the over great plenty of ſilver and gold; for were all her paper money but ſuppreſſed for three or four months, the moſt preſuming of the opulence of Great Britain would ſoon be convinced of the abſolute ſcarcity of real caſh. The immenſity of her taxes, however, renders this artificial aid in circulation at preſent neceſſary, and her merchants muſt fight their way in foreign markets in the beſt manner they can, though it be probable their commiſſions from abroad would be doubled, could they afford their merchandize at lower prices. Whatever eagerneſs foreigners expreſs for Britiſh manufactures, the dearneſs of thoſe manufactures damps their ardour for purchaſing them. I remember a very enterpriſing foreign retailer, who had received a quantity of Birmingham goods, which he much admired, being great-

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ly puzzled, nevertheleſs, with the invoice, the articles of which were written in French, and the ſums ſpecified in Engliſh money. He was hugging himſelf with the thoughts of a great bargain, and was forming plans of large dealings with England, having interpreted the £. and the s. in the invoice into livres and ſols; but when thoſe letters were explained to him as denoting pounds and ſhillings, (three and twenty times more than he had imagined) the utmoſt amazement was viſible on his countenance, and he immediately ſaid that he muſt write directly to his correſpondent, to ſend him no more goods, as he feared he ſhould not be able to ſell thoſe he had already received. Thus Great Britain, by her ſuperabunce of wealth, has in a great degree cut herſelf off from dealing to advantage with her poorer neighbours; but this is not a ſituation to be envied by Ireland. On the contrary, nothing could be more unfortunate for the Iriſh, than to have money as abundant in their iſland as it is in England; and indeed while England makes a branch of a ſovereignty, it is not in the nature of things that money ſhould be ſo plentiful there as in the provinces near the center of government, which is at the ſame time the center of commerce. But it does not follow from thence that poverty and miſery ſhould prevail in Ireland, as an acre may be equally prolific and fertile when rented at a ſhilling as when let at a guinea, and a manufacturer, who labours diligently twelve hours a day, will finiſh the ſame quantity of work, whether his wages be ſix pence a day or half a crown. The capital maxim to be obſerved in Ireland is, that the rents of the lands ſhould

bear a proportion to the ſmall quantity of currency; and in this view there ſeems to have been no leſs of ſound policy than of humanity in the order ſent home by lord Charlemont, when he was abſent on his travels, NOT to raiſe the rents of his tenants. If lands and induſtry in Ireland are too much neglected, money is there too much eſteemed, I mean trade is there burdened by the too high rate of the intereſt of money, when, as I have above obſerved, the preſent period affords a moſt conſtitutional expedient for reducing that rate to four or even three per cent. There is neither ſo much trade, nor ſo much money in the duchy of Tuſcany as in Ireland, yet at this very time the three per cents, at Florence are ſold above par. Were the intereſt of money reduced in Ireland, and the poor people to enjoy a ſettled comfortable life, free from vexations and from burdenſome takes, abundance would ſoon be more generally diffuſed, from their application to induſtry, and their confidence in the ſecure poſſeſſion of their own labour. In this caſe the complaints of the want of caſh might ſoon be turned into boaſtings of the cheapneſs of living, which contributes as much to the advancement of population, and the attracting of ſtrangers, as the opinion of high wages; witneſs the frequent emigrants to America, who generally aſſign that as the cauſe of their voluntary tranſportation. But the wants of mankind are of more kinds than one. Real abundance conſiſts in having manufactures at eaſy prices, as well as food; and the legiſlature of Ireland, with proper attention, and by making an alteration in the modes of taxation, might promote this two fold plenty much

much more generally throughout the iſland, without any augmentation of the preſent currency.

The throwing too much of the public burdens upon the poor, and exempting lands from taxes, is greatly detrimental to the ſtate in another view than that of checking the induſtry of manufacturers and labourers. The indolent land-proprietor of two or three hundred a year, who lives upon his eſtate, who kills his own meat, brews his own beer, bakes his own bread, makes his own candles, &c. is a ſubject, who, by the preſent mode of taxation, lives very uſeleſly for the ſtate, as the government can draw very little, either from him or his property, three fourths of which perhaps lies unimproved, or in a ſtate of nature, which is an eſſential loſs to the public. Take a number of journeymen in a manufacturing town, whoſe revenues together are but equal to that of the abovementioned landholder, and it will be found that their ſhare of the public taxes is twice as great as his, the ſtate at the ſame time being enriched by their induſtry to four or five times the amount of the taxes paid by them. Such a landholder, by his manner of life, not only contributes little to the public burdens, but actually keeps the nation from thriving; for, by ſuffering his wide domain to lie in a ſtate of nature, when, by proper cultivation in the hands of wealthy tenants, it might be made to yield four or five times as much, he obſtructs the improvement of territory, which is the greateſt of all national improvements. Would it not rather be an advantage than a detriment to the ſtate to tax the lands of ſuch a proprietor, and would not trade be

greatly advanced, if landlords of ſmall properties, who now live idly upon their eſtates, were induced to betake themſelves to commerce or manufactures, in the eaſy proſecution of which, their land-revenues would not a little aſſiſt them? This we ſee often practiſed in England and in France; and manufacturers or merchants, who traffic with ſuch ſtocks, can certainly afford to ſell cheaper, and puſh a more extenſive trade, than thoſe who carry on commerce with borrowed funds. Whatever tends to diminiſh the number of *workers*, and the increaſe the number of *waſters*, hurts a ſtate; but few things have a greater tendency to promote both theſe, than to encourage, by an almoſt total exemption from public burdens, landlords of ſmall properties to live idly, and to breed up their families in the ſame manner of living.

From what has been written above, I think it plainly appears, that the people of Ireland are far from being ſo poor as they imagine themſelves to be, from their ſmall ſtock of currency; and likewiſe, that they are not ſo burdened, either by their taxes or their abſentees, as they generally believe. That the wealth of Ireland does not correſpond with the extent and fertility of her territory, with the riches of her ſurrounding ſeas, and her convenient ſituation for foreign commerce, every one acquainted with that iſland will moſt readily allow; but I am far from attributing that to heavy taxation, to the drains of abſentees, or to the ſmall quantity of caſh. It is much more applicable to the claſhing and animoſity of different religions, which have dulled the hand of huſbandry, to the very uncultivated ſtate of the lands, to the high

intereſt of money, to diſcouraging leaſes, to the want of dock-yards and ſhip carpenters, and the employment of foreign ſhips, to the luxurious indulgence in foreign products and manufactures, to injudicious taxes, and above all to a partially limited foreign trade.

This laſt is certainly the greateſt grievance of all others, and has long been a reproach to the counſels of Great Britain; for while it has ſubſiſted, it may very juſtly be ſaid, to have been attended with no leſs prejudice to this iſland than to Ireland. That ill founded narrow principle of conforming our commercial regulations to the Dutch model, miſled ſome of our politicians in the laſt century, to make the abſurd ſuppoſition, that our circumſtances might be bettered, if half our territory were deſtroyed, that is, if what yielded us annually the value of fifteen millions were annihilated. It was better, according to them, to fetch corn from Poland, than to have it of our own growth, better to bring black cattle by ſea from the Baltic, or the coaſt of the Adriatic, than to drive them from our own mountains. The Dutch, they ſaid, were acquiring opulence and power, and were amaſſing wealth faſter, and in a higher degree, than any other ſtate in Europe: therefore happy the ſtate that could imitate them, and put itſelf in their ſituation, which would raiſe it to a degree of eminence ſuperior to what it could expect from a large and fertile territory; though they alledged nothing to prove that maxims of induſtry might not prevail in the large territory, as well as in the narrow ſwamp; and totally overlooked the wealth that nature

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ſpontaneouſly produces from territory alone, independent of the induſtry of man, which is ſometimes one third of the wealth of a ſtate. The Dutch, at this moment, are ſinking in their importance in Europe, from the very cauſe formerly aſſigned by our political writers for their opulence and grandeur, I mean the narrowneſs of territory; and their immenſe ſtocks of money, their number of ſhips, and their populous towns will not be able to ſecure them againſt a ſtill farther decline, ſhould their maritime neighbours become more active in commerce, and appropriate to themſelves their natural advantages. Should Great Britain aſſert the ſame excluſive right of fiſhing in her ſeas at home, as ſhe has ſecured in the ſeas of Newfoundland; and ſhould other European nations imitate her example in that particular; ſhould all the different ſpices of the Eaſt be raiſed in the Britiſh, French, and Spaniſh Weſt Indies; and ſhould each nation be the carrier of its own merchandize, the power and opulence of the Dutch would ſoon become proportioned to the narrowneſs and badneſs of their territory, notwithſtanding the utmoſt efforts of induſtry on the part of the inhabitants. The hiſtories of paſt ages moſt plainly declare, that power, founded on commerce in a narrow territory, has always been precarious and tranſitory; nevertheleſs the ſplendid period of the Dutch republic ſo dazzled the minds of many people in England, that they forgot their own natural advantages to over-rate theirs, and could they but acquire commerce, were not ſollicitous within what narrow limits it was reſtrained, falſely eſteeming the balance of wealth procured by trade before

before the advantages arising from widening the circle of industry over a fertile soil, possessing above three thousand miles of sea-coast.

What should we think of the governments of France and Spain, should they lay penal restrictions upon one third of their provinces, in regard to industry and trade, with a view of procuring an accumulation of wealth to the other two thirds. The commonest observer, upon reading such an article of intelligence in a gazette, supposing him a British subject, might make the following comment upon it. This is a circumstance extremely favourable to Great Britain. The French and Spaniards, by such a political regulation, will most effectually check their own power; for the provinces thus laid under penal restrictions, whatever natural advantages they possess, must necessarily languish, and yield much less profit to the whole than they would otherwise do; and in the favoured provinces, things will soon rise to such high prices, and manufactures will become so dear, that they will no longer rival ours in foreign markets, or be poured in upon us by our smugglers. While the French and Spaniards continue thus blind to their own interest, they will become every day less objects of jealousy to us.

But it is not the French and the Spaniards who act thus imprudently; it is the inhabitants of Great Britain. What must the French and Spaniards think of us, when they see us neglect one third of our provinces, while our foreign trade is actually threatened with a stagnation in the other two thirds, on account of the excessive dearness of provi-

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ſions and labour? Though Ireland, on account of its vicinity to us, and its ſubjection to the ſame ſovereign authority with ourſelves, ought to have been conſidered merely as a part of Great Britain, and a very conſiderable part, our legiſlature has nevertheleſs moſt impolitically neglected the intereſts of Ireland, from a falſe perſuaſion of thereby advancing the intereſts of this iſland. But the advancing the intereſt of both iſlands, as one object, ought ever to have been the point aimed at in all general deliberations of Great Britain. A commercial nation, that would wiſh to ſecure a permanent grandeur, muſt found her power on the board baſis of territory, every part of which territory ought proportionally to enjoy the advantages ariſing from the commercial balance. When the nouriſhment, that is, when induſtry and commerce, are juſtly diſtributed, all the parts become vigorous, and the ſtrength of the whole will daily encreaſe, till it bear a proportion to the extent of the territory, nay, may even exceed that proportion, and ſtill be counted natural, if the territory be bounded every where by the ſea, and have on all ſides numbers of excellent ports.

Theſe laſt circumſtances are wholly applicable to the natural ſituation of Great Britain and Ireland; and were our commerce to be regulated by them, it might be rendered much more extenſive and more lucrative, and conſequently the collective ſtrength of both iſlands be greatly augmented. But now the political as well as the natural ſituation of Great Britain and Ireland points out to us the urgent neceſſity of a communication of commercial advantages to the latter iſland; and

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views moſt plainly, that to perſevere in the preſent ſyſtem of excluſion would be the height of impolicy. Great Britain ought no longer to regard Ireland as a rival *Siſter*, but as a *joint Parent* of America; in which caſe Ireland would ſoon have a parent's concern, and would concur with pleaſure in maintaining our and her own rights and intereſts in that part of the world againſt every European diſturber. The time, I ſay, is at length arrived for a total change of ſyſtem in regard to Ireland; and, therefore, the legiſlature of Great Britain will now, moſt undoubtedly, advance the proſperity of both iſlands, by enacting, in conjunction with the legiſlature of the neighbouring kingdom, That the foreign trade of Ireland be, in every reſpect, put upon the ſame footing as the foreign trade of Great Britain; That the duties laid in either kingdom, upon the products or manufactures of the other, be reciprocally ſuppreſſed and aboliſhed; and that all veſſels ſailing from one iſland to the other be conſidered as coaſting veſſels, and be ſubject only to the ſame regulations as ſuch veſſels are ſubject to; that the communication and trade between Ireland and the Britiſh ſettlements in America and Africa, be put upon the ſame footing as the trade between Great Britain and thoſe ſettlements; That, in conſideration of this general liberty of trade, the kingdom of Ireland ſhall always pay for the ſupport of government, and the public defence of the ſtate, a land-tax of equal rate with the land tax of Great Britain for the time being; That the denominations and the value of the denominations of money ſhall be the ſame in both kingdoms; That the port duties or cuſtoms upon all merchandize, exported or imported, be

the ſame in Ireland as in Great Britain; That the rate of the intereſt of money be reduced in Ireland; That the additional taxes, raiſed as an equivalent for a freedom of trade, be always appropriated to the building of ſhips of war, and the maintaining and ſupporting a naval ſtrength in Ireland, &c. Theſe, and ſuch other regulations as may appear moſt fitting to the prudence of each legiſlature for putting both iſlands upon a perfect equality in reſpect to foreign trade, would ſoon animate induſtry in Ireland, and conſequently increaſe her annual income, and render her of much more advantage to Great Britain than ſhe is at preſent.

I am very ſenſible, that the propoſal I have made of granting a freedom of trade to Ireland, will have many prejudices and partial intereſts to encounter with; but I am at the ſame time perſuaded, that thoſe who will impartially weigh the preſent ſtate of both iſlands, will moſt readily acknowledge both the *equity* and the *expediency* of ſuch a freedom of trade. Old prejudices ought to have no weight, when the cauſes that gave riſe to them have ceaſed: and all partial and private intereſts ought to yield to the intereſt of the public, I mean that of the whole community. It would be injurious, ſome will ſay, to the inhabitants of this iſland to put the Iriſh upon the ſame footing with them in regard to foreign trade, ſince the Iriſh do not bear ſuch heavy public burdens as the former, that is, do not contribute ſo amply to the general charges of the ſtate. This has been, and is ſtill, the chief and moſt plauſible objection againſt extending the freedom of trade to Ireland; but as the reaſoning contained in it proves too much, it proves nothing; for by

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the ſame argument more than the half of England, with all Scotland, ought to be cut off from the freedom of trade, ſince they together do not contribute ſo much to the public burdens as the county of Middleſex joined to fourteen or fifteen other home counties †. Great Britain, taken collectively, contributes in a greater proportion to the public burdens than Ireland, taken in the ſame view; but that is owing to the immenſe circulation and expence of London, the common capital of the whole empire: and in ſupporting the exceſſive expence of that center of union, Ireland, as a member, contributes her ſhare, together with the remote parts of England, with Scotland, America, and the Eaſt and Weſt Indies. Ireland, in all our political deliberations, ought to be conſidered merely as a remote part of Great Britain; and if we examine her public burdens in that view, and compare them with thoſe levied in any part of this iſland at a great diſtance from the capital, and of equal extent with Ireland, the diſproportion between the Iriſh and thoſe Britiſh taxes will not be very conſiderable. To leſſen that diſproportion, and to bring the burdens in both nearer to an equality, I have propoſed ſome augmentation in Ireland, by a land-tax, to riſe and fall as that tax ſhall riſe and fall in Britain; the moſt equitable, in point of impoſition, and the moſt conducive to forward and promote induſtry in Ireland. Beſides, conſidering Ireland merely as a remote

† Such an excluſion would be making one monopoly the cauſe of another; for the great proportion of taxes paid by the capital is owing to one ſixth of our foreign trade, namely, the Eaſt India trade, being monopolized by the port of London.

part of Great Britain, it ought, on that very account, to be more favoured in point of taxation than the provinces near the center of government, as circulation, both in the natural and political body, is always more languid towards the extremities than towards the heart; and wages and rents ought naturally to be always lower in Ireland than in the countries near London. Should the Irish then consent to but a small augmentation of taxes, in that case, they could no longer be said to stand precluded from the *right to the freedom of trade.*

The mercantile short sighted policy of confining the woollen manufactures to England, has likewise been another objection to the extending the freedom of trade to Ireland; and has, in its consequences, been attended with many losses and disadvantages to Great Britain, by throwing that branch of manufacture into the hands of our continental rivals, who hold an interest contrary to ours. Had we considered Ireland, as in true policy it ought always to have been considered, merely as a part of Great Britain, we should never have thought that the woollen manufacture moved from home, when we saw a branch of it flourish in Ireland. Indeed, there ought to be no more cause of alarm in seeing the woollen manufacture, or any other manufacture, flourish in Ireland, than in seeing another Birmingham rise in Sussex, or another Leeds rise in Dorsetshire. Whoever should urge the arguments used in King William's time, or in the time of King Charles II. for justifying the jealousy of trade in regard to Ireland, would reason extremely false upon the subject. Those arguments, even then, were far from

from being concluſive; and had they even been juſt at that period, the political ſtate of both iſlands is of late years ſo greatly altered, that they would be falſe now. England, at that time, might be ſaid to have hardly any intercourſe or trade with America, ſo inconſiderable were the American colonies then, to what they are at preſent; neither was Scotland then united with her, nor had ſhe the manufactures of ſilk, of cotton, of hardware, of hats, of paper, with twenty other kinds, that have ſince taken root and now flouriſh among us. She was then almoſt confined to one ſingle ſpecies of manufacture: namely, the woollen, the market for which, both foreign and domeſtic, was twice as extenſive as at preſent. In thoſe times, our ladies wore ſtuffs; now, even our very ſervant maids are cloathed in ſilks and cottons. The ſame alteration has taken place in moſt of the nations abroad; and even in the ſilk countries, tho conſumption of ſilks is much more conſiderable at preſent than it was an hundred years ago; all of which circumſtances have contributed to make the woollen manufacture an object of much leſs importance in theſe days than it was in former times. The Engliſh, in the laſt century, having in a manner but one manufacture, and being totally unacquainted with any other, ſaw nothing but miſery and poverty, ſhould they be rivalled in that by their neighbours of Ireland, whom they very falſely conſidered as people with hoſtile intentions, wiſhing for nothing ſo much as to have a religion and intereſt to themſelves. The bitter animoſity manifeſted in the late religious civil wars gave ſome colour to ſuch a ſuſpicion, eſpecially as England could not then

then depend upon the joint aſſiſtance of Scotland, and had then no Eaſt and Weſt India revenue; and Ireland, joined to the great advantage of low wages, a ſuperfluous abundance of the firſt material. What a different figure does Great Britain now make, with lands improved from one extremity of the iſland to the other, with amazingly extenſive and wide-ſpreading colonies, that abſolutely demand an enlargement of the trunk that is to ſuſtain and ſupport them, with not one manufacture alone, but with many, brought to great perfection, and an aſſured market for them among her American ſubjects; and how different, likewiſe, is the ſtate of Ireland from what it was in former times!

The cruel civil war, of nine years continuance, had ſo exhauſted Ireland, that in the beginning of the reign of Charles II. it had the air of a new ſettled colony. The oppoſite parties, not contented with ſhedding each other's blood, had ſpitefully ſlaughtered each other's cattle, which ſoon introduced a famine, that proved more waſteful than the ſword. If we add to thoſe two calamities the deſertion of great numbers of inhabitants, it may juſtly be concluded, that at the ſettlement by Cromwell there was hardly half the number of people in the iſland that there is in it at preſent. It ſeems to have been ſettled then much in the ſame manner as we now ſettle the colony of Florida. The grants of the adventurers, for want of inhabitants, were diſpoſed of at the greateſt undervaluation; and, to procure tenants and cultivators, many leaſes of lands were granted for terms of ninety-nine years, at a groat an acre; ſome

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of which leaſes have, of late years, been renewed, at a guinea an acre. Other inſtances might be produced to prove the great depopulation of the iſland at what is called its ſettlement after the civil war. When tranquillity was reſtored, improvement would immediately take place; but ſtocks of people are not ſo eaſily nor ſo quickly recruited as ſtocks of cattle and ſheep, which laſt, we find, were then exported thither, in great numbers, from England: the conſequence of which was, that Ireland was ſoon over-run with herds and flocks, and had much more wool and proviſions than her ſmall number of inhabitants could conſume. Wages being then extremely low, in conſequence of the great lowneſs of rents, it was moſt natural for the Iriſh to think of turning their ſuperfluity to advantage, and for the Engliſh, from the falſe maxims of policy that then filled their minds, to look upon them as formidable rivals, never ſuſpecting that rivals truly formidable might ſtart up in other quarters. Ireland, in its modern ſtate, preſents us with a very different proſpect. The number of its inhabitants is doubled, conſequently the home-conſumption of its wool and proviſions muſt likewiſe be doubled; and therefore the diſproportion between the people and the flocks cannot now be ſo great as formerly, ſince much more land muſt now be occupied by tillage, both for corn and flax, and the great luxury in horſes, ſo much increaſed of late years, demands a conſiderable part of the paſturage to be appropriated for them. The Iriſh are endeavouring yearly to throw more of their lands into tillage, as they now ſee the great impolicy of growing a

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ſufficient quantity of corn for their own ſubſiſtence; and ſhould they ſucceed in that œconomical plan, and ſhould a free and enlarged trade increaſe the number of their people, and raiſe the value of their lands, we ſhould ſoon hear no more of the ſuper-abundance or cheapneſs, either of their cattle or their wool, as they would, on this laſt ſuppoſition, ſtill require a greater quantity of both for their own conſumption, and the value of land being raiſed, would raiſe the prices of what the farmer brought to the market.

The breeders of cattle in the grazing counties in Great Britain will likewiſe cry out, that their intereſts will be affected upon allowing a freedom of importation from Ireland; but if we appeal to experience, we may ſafely affirm, that they need not be greatly alarmed on this ſubject; for I may aſk, if the gentlemen of the grazing counties in England found themſelves ſenſibly injured immediately after the union with Scotland, when the ſouthern market was opened for Scotch cattle, which have ever ſince been ſent into England in numbers ten times greater than can ever be expected to come from Ireland, ſhould a free communication be opened between Great Britain and that iſland? When all obſtructions to the mutual commerce of the two iſlands are removed, the prices of things, of courſe, will gradually approach near to an equality in both countries, which will greatly promote the eaſe of living through the whole; for it is not for the intereſt of a ſtate that any one county, or any one part, ſhould poſſeſs an artificial advantage over the others. It is the improving

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the natural advantages that beſt promotes the general welfare. The breeding of horſes is much more lucrative than the breeding of cattle; but the exceſſive dearneſs of butchers-meat ſeems to prove that the ſoil of Great Britain does not ſuffice for breeding both in the degree that our wants require for home-conſumption and exportation. If we would wiſh, therefore, to continue the advantageous commerce of the exportation of horſes, and at the ſame time have proviſions at moderate prices, we ought, without delay, to allow the free importation of Iriſh cattle, by which expedient, the labouring poor would be enabled to live upon their preſent wages, while the profits of the landed gentlemen in general would not be in the leaſt abated. Whoever conſiders the traffic for cattle and ſheep carried on between Scotland and England, muſt acknowledge, that it is extremely advantageous both to the northern and ſouthern parts of this iſland; but no reaſon can be given in favour of that traffic, that does not equally plead for opening a communication of the ſame kind between Ireland and Great Britain. That the want of ſuch a communication was a great prejudice to England, was the opinion of one of the ableſt of our political writers†, who makes it a query, "Whether it would "not be beſt for both kingdoms to take off "the prohibition that now lies on Iriſh cattle? "—It remains very doubtful, he ſays, when "this prohibition was ſet on foot, which was "moſt conſulted, public good or private "intereſt; the numbers of the breeding "were, without doubt, ſtronger at that time "than thoſe of the feeding lands. But it is "to be feared, in the making that act, that

† See Davenant's Political Works, vol. II. p. 257. Whitworth's edition.

" the general intereſt of England was not " ſufficiently conſidered." If the free admiſſion of Iriſh cattle would have promoted the intereſt of England ſeventeen years ago, as may be plainly inferred from the words of Davenant, there ſeems much ſtronger reaſon to conclude, that ſuch an importation, in the preſent period, would be extremely beneficial to this iſland, and would effect more in bringing proviſions to moderate prices, and keeping them ſo, than can be expected from the moſt patriotic ſubſcription for that purpoſe, the conſequences of which, it is to be feared, will be only temporary.

But all the objections to the propoſed regulations for a freedom of trade to Ireland will not be on the ſide of the inhabitants of Great Britain: the intereſted in Ireland will likewiſe have their objections to ſome clauſes, particularly to that for ſuppreſſing and aboliſhing the duties laid in either kingdom upon the products and manufactures of the other. This article, they will alledge, will open a door to the exceſſive importation of Engliſh manufactures into Ireland, to the detriment of the manufactures of that country. The clauſe is certainly meant to promote the intercourſe between the inhabitants of both iſlands; for when I mentioned the exceſſive indulgence in foreign products and manufactures, as one of the reaſons of the low ſtate of Ireland, I was far from intending to rank the products and manufactures of Great Britain as foreign in Ireland: on the contrary, I am moſt fully perſuaded, that it would be for the advantage of both iſlands

that

that nothing belonging to the one ſhould be looked upon as foreign in the other. Allowing that the clauſe will contribute to increaſe the ſale of Engliſh manufactures in Ireland, it will nevertheleſs have many other conſequences, beſides that, which ought alſo to be taken into the account, and which, on the whole, will moſt undoubtedly tend to the advantage of Ireland ſeparately, as well as collectively with Great Britain. By this clauſe, Iriſh manufactures, that are now prohibited in Great Britain, would be importable hither; and Iriſh products, alſo prohibited, would have a new, and, at the ſame time, a moſt free and extenſive market, with hardly any riſk of ſea. And by a ſubſequent clauſe in the ſame propoſed regulation, tobacco, ſugar, rum, and other products of the American colonies, may be brought directly into Ireland; by which the Iriſh will be gainers in a double reſpect, firſt, in having thoſe articles cheaper, and next, in raiſing the ſame public revenue from the importation of them as is raiſed in Great Britain. But in ſuch an intricate ſubject as this, we can beſt of all judge of what may happen by what has happened. When we have the experience of a ſimilar caſe before our eyes, the conſequences we would draw from the preſent have then a degree of certainty equal to demonſtration. At the union of England and Scotland, did either kingdom ſuffer when the barriers that obſtructed mutual commerce were broke down? Did not both, on the contrary, gain by the open communication? Before that period, the prohibitions were extremely rigorous in both kingdoms, in regard to each others products and manufactures;

but though Scotland now conſumes ten times more of Engliſh manufactures than ſhe did ſeventy years ago, and her abſentees are an hundred times more numerous; ſo far from being impoveriſhed by thoſe two ſeemingly alarming circumſtances, ſhe is increaſed in riches, people, and manufactures, conſiderably. We may be confident, therefore, that the ſame thing would happen to the Iriſh, were every prohibition and reſtraint removed in the mutual commerce of the two iſlands, and a general freedom of trade granted to Ireland.

Many people in Ireland, from intereſted or from narrow views, will alſo be ready to object to that article propoſing the port-duties, or cuſtoms, to be the ſame in both kingdoms upon all merchandize exported or imported. Such an article, it may be ſaid, would alter the preſent channels of commerce to the Iriſh, and deprive them of ſome markets, where it is generally ſuppoſed they trade to advantage. But it ought to be remembered, that a freedom of trade cannot be granted to the Iriſh without ſuch a condition, which, if it would bar up ſome channels of trade to them, would open others equally lucrative, and much more natural. Without ſuch a condition there could be no equality, and conſequently no freedom of trade between Great Britain and Ireland; for many foreign commercial articles, now in a manner prohibited in Great Britain, have a very eaſy entry into Ireland; and it would be abſurd to eſtabliſh a reciprocal freedom of trade between the two iſlands, and ſuffer foreign articles, the importation of which into Great Britain is deemed prejudicial to our intereſts, to be freely imported

into

into Ireland, from whence they could be ſo eaſily introduced into this iſland. The Iriſh, however, in exchanging ſome of their preſent channels of trade for others, would not only be gainers in procuring, upon that condition, a general freedom of trade, but would alſo gain conſiderably in the very change of the markets. For example, in the great ſtaple article of proviſions, the Britiſh market, with that of the Weſt Indies, would certainly be ample equivalents for any diminutions in the markets in France, Spain, and other foreign countries, where they now trade. Should French wines, and ſome other foreign articles of luxury become ſomewhat dearer in Ireland upon ſuch a revolution, many other articles would become cheaper; and the latter may be ſet to counterbalance the former. The ſunſhine of arts and induſtry is in a manner ſpread over only one half of Ireland; and two of her provinces may, at this very day, be called provinces of France, as much as provinces of Great Britain. This unnatural connexion with France, ſo detrimental both to Ireland and Great Britain, has certainly been promoted by the imprudent reſtraints laid here upon the trade of Ireland; and what do the Iriſh chiefly gain by this connection? That their low people may riot in poor French claret, the conſumption of which is too much encouraged over the whole iſland, on account of its cheapneſs, which has ſerved as a premium to bring it within the reach of thoſe who, from their ſtations in life, would otherwiſe in all probability, have been contented with home-brewed liquors. Were the Iriſh, inſtead of trading ſo largely with France, to have a free trade to Great Britain

and to the Britiſh Weſt Indies, with back-freights of ſugar and rum from thence, directly to Ireland, the conſumption of rum would greatly increaſe in that iſland, and might in time ſuperſede the conſumption of French wines, to the great advantage of our Weſt India iſlands. It is univerſally allowed, that an extenſion of our ſugar colonies would tend to enlarge the trade of Great Britain with foreign nations; and yet, by impolitic reſtraints thrown upon Ireland, we in a manner deprive our ſugar-colonies of that market, and force the Iriſh to a very general conſumption of foreign ſugars. If the North Americans are ſuffered to carry home ſugars, rum, and molaſſes, without reſtraint, and no inconveniences have been alledged to attend that commerce, it is certainly full time for us to awaken from our lethargic dream, and to permit a free intercourſe between Ireland and all our American ſettlements; and in that caſe it might be expected, that the Iriſh merchants, though they might at firſt have ſome repugnance in quitting their old and accuſtomed channels of commerce, would ſoon find the new trade propoſed more fitted to the proſperity of Ireland, more lucrative to themſelves, and much more conducive to advance the ſtrength and grandeur of the Britiſh empire in general.

The lowering the rate of the intereſt of money in Ireland, is no leſs neceſſary for the proſperity of that iſland than a general freedom of trade; and is propoſed as an article in the above commercial regulations, with the double view of promoting induſtry in Ireland, and of obtaining a further reduction of intereſt in Great Britain, which operation

ration will be greatly facilitated by a previous reduction of intereſt in Ireland. About twelve years hence an opportunity will offer for reducing a conſiderable part of the public debts of Great Britain to two, or two and an half per cent; but, if intereſt is ſuffered to continue high in Ireland, it will be very difficult, or next to impoſſible for Great Britain to draw all the advantage from that opportunity, which it will otherwiſe afford. Public credit in Ireland, has not yet put on the fetters of the monied men; therefore the legiſlature of that iſland, by a moſt conſtitutional expedient, may eaſily reduce the legal rate of intereſt to three, or four per cent. which would be attended with many happy conſequences, both to the landed gentleman and merchant, and ſoon give additional vigour to the ſtate. In proportion to the ſucceſſive reductions of intereſt in Great Britain, has induſtry thriven in this iſland, and its power and opulence is increaſed. The conſequences of thoſe reductions have been ſo evident, both in regard to the public and to the advancement of trade, that it is now in a manner the general ſentiment among all ranks of people, that the lowneſs of the rate of intereſt contributes to advance the proſperity of the nation. From ſome unhappy circumſtances, however, or ſome inadvertence in our government, the ſpace of time that has elapſed ſince the laſt reduction of intereſt is much greater than that between the two preceding reductions, and we, who were wont to precede ſome of our neighbours in that regulation, have lately ſuffered them to precede us; for both the French and Auſtrians, ſince the concluſion of the late peace,

have

have reduced the rate of intereſt in their dominions to four per cent. Thoſe operations, in ſtates where trade and currency are far from being ſo conſiderable as in Great Britain, ought to awaken us to embrace every favourable opportunity of effecting a farther reduction of intereſt in this kingdom. Ireland at preſent affords ſuch an opportunity; and a conſiderable reduction of intereſt in that kingdom, ſo very practicable at this period, would demonſtrate the eaſy practicability of effecting the ſame in Great Britain, when the occaſion ſhould arive. The obſervation of the ingenious Dr. Price, in regard to ſurpluſes from a high intereſt employed in reducing a capital, accumulating, faſter than ſurpluſes from a low intereſt, is nothing but a mere arithmetical computation, and, as ſuch, is extremely juſt; but it is far from following from thence, that it is for the advantage of a ſtate, to have either public debts, or thoſe of individuals at a high intereſt; and I am perſuaded the doctor himſelf would not draw ſuch an inference from it, though ſome of his readers, I ſuſpect, will be apt to interpret it as an argument in favour of the high rate of intereſt. I will preſent the reader with a politico-arithmetical computation, drawn from the rate of intereſt, very different from the doctor's, but which proves to a demonſtration, that the low intereſt of money contributes eſſentially to lighten the burden of the national debts, or, in other words, enables the nation to bear ſuch a load as would overwhelm her if money were at an high intereſt. The great pledge for the ſecurity of the repayment of the national debt is the land of Great Britain;

tain; and it is an allowed maxim, confirmed by many facts for these hundred years past, that, as the interest of money has decreased, the value of lands is risen, nearly in the proportion of five years purchase for one per cent. diminution. Suppose money then at five per cent, and lands at twenty-five years purchase, the value of the great pledge will, in that case, be twenty-five times twenty-two millions, which will amount to five hundred and fifty millions. But if we suppose money at three per cent. the marketable value of the lands would be thirty-five years purchase, or seven hundred and seventy millions, that is, the pledge would be two hundred and twenty millions of pounds more valuable on the supposition of money at three per cent. than on that of money at five per cent. Another great pledge of security to the public creditors, is the annual stock of industry of the whole nation; and the more considerable this is, the more lightly the burden will be felt: but few things tend so much to increase industry as the low rate of interest; therefore the lessening that rate, till it be brought to a par with that of our commercial neighbours, ought to be a constant object of administration; and the beginning with Ireland will give a great facility in any operation of that kind in Great Britain†.

† Mr. Pinto, greatly distinguished for his commercial and political knowledge, not only in England, but in Holland and France, has, in a late essay upon circulation, viewed the debts of Great Britain in a singular, but very erroneous light. According to him, the national debt is a mass of riches to Great Britain, as the four millions and an half that are paid annually to the public creditors, occasions such a circulation in the state, as greatly augments the general wealth. But his reasoning upon the effects of circulation is altogether inconclusive, and has made him exaggerate any good effects the public debts may have had, without attending to their bad consequences. In page 15.

Another article in the propoſed regulations is, That the additional taxes to be raiſed

he tells us, that four millions of taxes paid to the public creditors, occaſions fifteen or twenty millions in circulation; in another place he affirms, that one million may produce twenty millions, and in a third place, that three millions of rents may produce ten millions in circulation. Thoſe variations ſhew the uncertainty of the author, in regard to the truth of his own principle, which will not bear the teſt of analizing; for let us take his ſmalleſt eſtimate, that three millions of rents give occaſion to ten millions in circulation, in that proportion, twenty-ſix millions and a half, which is the amount of the land rents and public annuities joined together, would occaſion an annual circulation in Great Britain of eighty-eight millions. But there is another active revenue in this ſtate, of at leaſt forty millions, which produces the ſame effect in circulation as rents, conſequently, in the above proportion, this ought likewiſe to occaſion a circulation of an hundred and thirty-three millions, not to mention the king's revenue or civil liſt, which ought to occaſion a circulation of two millions ſix hundred thouſand pounds; and ſeven millions of taxes, which ſhould produce twenty-three millions in circulation. This would make a ſum total of annual circulation in Great Britain of two hundred and forty-ſix millions; and if ſuch is the ſum at his ſmalleſt eſtimate, how enormous would it be if taken at the higheſt proportion! Circulation is but a general word, including all purchaſes and ſales, or the univerſal expence of the people in their mutual traffic with each other; and reckoning eight millions of people in Great Britain, two hundred and forty-ſix millions of circulations would ſuppoſe an expence of near thirty-one pounds per head, or, at ſix perſons to a family, one hundred and eighty-three pounds for each family in Great Britain, when it is probably not much above twelve pounds per head; and was computed by Sir William Petty, an hundred years ago, but at five pounds per head. Mr. Pinto's ſuppoſitions ſeem to be inconcluſive taken in another view; for if four millions of rents belonging to public creditors be of ſuch importance to the ſtate, five millions would be ſtill more ſo, and ſix millions ſtill better; but I fancy few people will believe that our circumſtances would be improved by ſuch an artificial revenue, that could only be raiſed by an augmentation of taxes. I muſt, however, do Mr. Pinto the juſtice to mention, that he himſelf allows a *maximum*, which the public debts ought not to exceed, though he places that *maximum* at a very great diſtance.

As the wealth and power of Great Britain are remarkably increaſed within theſe ſixty years, and it is likewiſe notorious, that our public debts are more than tripled within the ſame ſpace, I am afraid he has ſuffered himſelf to be miſled in believing the latter to be the cauſe of the former. Other reaſons, however, much more ſubſtantial than thoſe drawn from circulation, may be aſſigned why the nation has increaſed in power and opulence, notwithſtanding the augmented burden of the public debts. Firſt, it may be allowed that thoſe debts have operated ſome good effects. All the money raiſed upon loans, during our late foreign wars, has not been blown away in gun-powder; much of it has been accumulated by thoſe who have had tranſactions with government, in conſequence of which eſtates have been purchaſed, lands improved, and many houſes built upon new foundations.

ed in Ireland, as an equivalent for a freedom of trade, be always appropriated to the

H 2 building

Besides, the public stock of movables, if I may use the expression, has been thereby increased; and be now perhaps a considerable part of the expence of our improved dock yards, and the building of two hundred ships of war, in that period. Thirdly, The beneficial trade to the Continent that have been enabled and included, by acts of Parliament in England, within these forty years past, have in a manner enlarged our territory, by rendering the same ground by many degrees more fruitful. Thirdly, The improvements in Scotland since the Union have been so great as to enable the people there both to furnish more to the English market and to draw more from it than formerly. Fourthly, The lands over all Great Britain have been further improved, and their purchasable value more than doubled. Fifthly, The raised rents of lands have required a greater quantity of money (real or artificial) to be kept up in circulation, which, though it may be attended with great disadvantages in regard to foreign trade, at least, facilitates the payment of large taxes. Sixthly, the remittances from Ireland within these forty years, are greatly increased; and from our colonies in North America and the West Indies more than quadrupled. Seventhly, The East India Company, of late years, has added to the national wealth. Eighthly, and Last of all, the reduction of the interest of money has freed both the state and individuals from many incumbrances. In the year 1717, government was paying £. 3,356,942, as the interest of a debt of £. 44,542,557; but at present it only pays about one million more for a debt of one hundred and thirty two millions. Now as the capital debt is not demandable, it is only the interest that can be considered as the burden; therefore, in effect, the national incumbrances, instead of being twice what they were thirty years past, are actually augmented only one fourth; that is, instead of standing as three to nine, they only stand as four to nine, while the fund for the security of that debt is much more than doubled; and that chiefly by a territorial improvement, or better than of the lands, reckoning Great Britain and her dependencies as one territory.

Of all the causes above alleged for diminishing the burden of the public debts, the last is by far the most considerable; as a fall from seven per cent. to three per cent. is a fall of more than one half, and is more than equivalent to the doubling the fund for repayment. How high Great Britain may carry her credit with safety, is a question that experience alone can resolve; but should the diminution of circulation be farther all than is generally imagined, one thing we may have the most certain of, that we approach very near the extreme of the diminution of interest; and that very moderate as the public debts are now be sustained by nothing but an augmentation of taxes, which an increase of trade and of population can alone enable the nation to support. A fall of interest from three to two per cent. will operate much less than the preceding reduction from seven to three; and though the annual expence of the nation, within these forty years, be only augmented one million on account of the public debts, yet the annual charge, for the support of government, is higher by four millions than it was in the former period, including in this last expence the accumulations of the sinking fund. These two last considerations will de-

monstrate

building of ſhips of war, and to the maintaining and ſupporting a naval force in that iſland. As a very important part of our dominion now lies beyond the Atlantic Ocean, there is nothing Great Britain ought to give more attention to at preſent than to the increaſing her central maritime force. Inſtead of waſting great ſums in colonizing deſarts in America, ſhe ought to ſpare no expence in colonizing the ſea coaſts of Great Britain and Ireland. Theſe two iſlands together, and not Great Britain alone, ought to be conſidered as the *metropole*, or mother country of all the colonies; therefore, when I mention the increaſing our central naval force as neceſſary, I do not mean that it ſhould all be confined to the river Thames, or even to the ports of Great Britain, The increaſing naval ſettlements upon all the coaſts both of Great Britain and Ireland, would be the moſt likely means of inducing many people to purſue a ſeafaring life, and, conſequently, of augmenting our home naval ſtrength. We have hitherto, from a moſt ill-judged jealouſy, ſeemed not to care how naked Ireland was left of every thing that ſerved to maintain dominion, while the North Americans have been encouraged with all the fondneſs of an indulgent parent to proſecute ſhipbuilding, fiſheries, and foreign commerce to a very extenſive degree. Ireland, nevertheleſs, has certainly a much more natural claim to the prior attention of government; and her intereſt would have been much more linked with that of Great Britain, if her maritime ports had been more numerous and more

monſtrate to every thinking perſon the urgent neceſſity of diminiſhing the maſs of the public debts, which muſt now be leſſened at top, as it will not be practicable, for a dozen of years to come to leſſen it much at bottom.

more conſiderable. As the land force of Ireland does not at preſent require any farther expence, the additional taxes propoſed could not be laid out more properly than in eſtabliſhing a royal dock-yard in ſome port on the weſtern or ſouthern ſhores of that iſland. The local advantages of ſuch an eſtabliſhment, in buildings, and conſumption of proviſions, would redound to the county where it was made; but the maritime ſtrength which it would raiſe, would as much appertain to Great Britain as that of Portſmouth or Plymouth; and the nurſery of ſhip-carpenters and ſeamen, would as much ſerve to advance our commerce as if it were eſtabliſhed upon the river Thames. The French and Spaniards have naval docks on the Atlantic Ocean, as well as in the Mediterranean Sea; but we who have now ſo much concern with the Atlantic, have yet no proper port upon it. The chief royal dock-yard of France is in the moſt weſtern port of that kingdom, and in a province where the French language is not generally underſtood; yet, I believe, few people acquainted at all with France, will heſitate in determining, that the royal arſenal is more advantageouſly ſituated at Breſt, than it would be at the mouth of the Seine. An armament fitted out in one of the weſtern ports of Ireland, for an expedition to the Weſtern or Southern Seas, might have the advantage of three or four weeks over one fitted out at Portſmouth for the ſame deſtination, which would not only ſhorten the riſks at ſea, but might be of great importance in regard to the lives of ſailors and ſoldiers, and render the execution of the enterprize more certain, and leſs expenſive.

But

But inſtead of gaining an advantage of three or four weeks only, by ſitting out on the weſtern coaſt of Ireland, we might, on many occaſions, gain a whole campaign, of which we had a diſagreeable proof in the laſt war, in the armament fitted out againſt Louiſburg; for, in all probability, had that armament been to ſet ſail from the weſt of Ireland, it would have reached Cape Breton time enough to have reduced the place a year ſooner, in conſequence of which Canada might have been conquered, and the war happily terminated, without the expence of ſo many campaigns.

To ſum up all, Ireland does not now ſtand in the ſame relation to Great Britain as formerly; therefore the period is arrived for a total change of political ſyſtem in regard to that iſland. A ſkilful gardener is attentive to proportion the branches of his trees to the trunks that are to ſupport them, and as Great Britain is daily expanding her branches to a wider extent over America, true policy would dictate to us the propriety of enlarging and ſtrengthening the trunk that is to ſuſtain thoſe branches, by a communication of all commercial advantages to Ireland, and conſidering both iſlands but as one. Were we but ſtudious to promote induſtry in Ireland, and in the diſtant provinces in Great Britain, we need be no more ſollicitous about the ballance of trade between the two iſlands, than about that between Southampton and the Iſle of Wight, as the gain of either would be the national gain. Though many partial intereſts would be affected in both iſlands, by putting commerce upon an equal footing in each, yet the experience of the many advantages

vantages that have accrued to England and Scotland by their mutual union, gives us a moſt demonſtrative proof that the general national intereſt would be greatly promoted by granting a freedom of trade to Ireland, without any farther union of the two iſlands. Were the number of trading veſſels and ſailors in Ireland ten times greater than it now is, Great Britain would have no cauſe of apprehenſion from that, but rather matter of rejoicing. Were Ireland, in all her ports, to have naval docks, and numbers of ſhip-carpenters; were her quantity of circulating money to be doubled; were her lands to produce four times as much as at preſent, and her mines in general wrought to greater advantage, Great Britain, I ſay, would have nothing to apprehend from all thoſe circumſtances, and from that accumulation of power. That ſtrength and riches would be a ſtrength and riches co-operating with ours. The intereſts of both iſlands being put, as they naturally ought to be, upon the ſame level, the views of both would be the ſame; and the greater their intercourſe with each other, the greater would be their happineſs and proſperity; but ſtill the larger iſland, having the advantage of the ſeat of empire, would maintain the ſuperiority of wealth over the ſmaller. However valuable the balance of trade may be, yet to every ſtate, the ſtrengthening the center of dominion ought to be an object of much more importance. But both theſe objects are now attainble by Great Britain, in a moſt eminent degree, if ſhe will conſent to throw away the jealouſy and rivalſhip of the trade of Ireland, and admit that iſland to an equal participation of

advantages

advantages with herſelf, in every point relative to foreign commerce. If we regard ſolidity and duration, the higher we wiſh to raiſe the pyramid, the broader we ought to make the baſe.

THE END.

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A comparative view of the public burdens of Great Britain and Ireland

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